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EC1167 Enjoyment of Pictures

Rizpah A. Douglass

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Enjoyment of Pictures

An Attractive Reading Group

The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln
The companionship of good pictures is a constant source of pleasure as well as having an influence in forming the tastes and ideals of the members of the family. To study pictures and find out the secrets of their beauty is a pleasure one never knows until one indulges in it. It is fascinating and inexhaustible for one could study a lifetime and then not have become acquainted with all the artists and their works. As much enjoyment and inspiration can come from the study of a picture as may come from reading a good book.

A masterpiece in art, as in literature, is a living and enduring pleasure if our eyes are open to its beauty, or if we only understand, or can interpret its meaning. A picture is only as great as the painter is great spiritually or intellectually. The reason that an artist paints a picture is because he has a greater capacity for seeing and expressing beauty than we. He does not copy what he sees as a camera does, but he interprets for us his impression of the subject as he felt it. Many people can see a group of trees, a sunset, or a dawn with the eyes and feeling of an artist, but have not the ability to draw and paint, to arrange the shapes into a pattern or contrast dark with light so it will express what we feel and so others will understand.

**Pleasure from a Picture**

Content - Many people do not enjoy a picture unless it tells a story. Many good pictures do tell stories but we should also be able to appreciate a picture for its beauty of line and its fine pattern and color. A picture should appeal to the imagination, make one think, wonder, or dream. Sometimes we will like a picture because it reminds us of some special place, a landscape, or of a pet. A lover of dogs will naturally be interested in dog pictures. Notice the picture, see if the artist painted it exactly like nature or did he change it to bring out just what he wanted one to see. Content is the theme of the picture and the way the artist presents it.

There is a difference between a beautiful picture and a pretty picture. When a picture is really beautiful it will have certain qualities:

1. It will have been considered great by experts thru a long period of time.
2. It will be one a person will want to look at again and again, one will wonder about it and each time see something that had not been seen in it before.
3. It will have color that is rich, not gaudy.
4. One will feel that the artist had a great appreciation of beauty and expressed it sincerely.

A pretty picture is likely to have crude color, and be sentimental in its feeling.

**Color** - Painting satisfies our love of color. We are always surrounded by color in nature and man has had a jolly time expressing himself in color. The Egyptians painted their temples, the Greeks their statues, the French, in the Gothic period, painted in colored glass in the windows of their cathedrals. In a painting we are likely to find the brightest color where the painter wishes to hold our attention and subdued colors in the background and large areas.

**Center of Interest** - In the pattern or design of every fine picture, there is one place which we see first, that is called the center of interest. There is also a second interest and sometimes even a third, each of less importance, each making
the main center more important. The artist uses many different ways to make one see
the center of interest or the thing he wishes one to see first. A strong, light
surrounded by darkness was used by Rembrandt. In Whistler's Mother, the light face is
surrounded by a dark background, her dark dress also tends to make one see her face
more quickly. Sometimes many lines lead the attention to the most important object
as in Madame de Scudery and her Daughter. The eye follows up the arms of the child and
mother. Sometimes a more vivid color is used as in Red Roofs. Two or more of these
methods may be used in the same picture.

Line - One always feels in a good picture that every line, form and color
has been carefully placed. that nothing can be added or taken away without spoil ing
the beauty of the whole. This orderly arrangement may be built on a triangle as in
Madame de Scudery and her Daughter or it may be in a circle as the Madonna of the Chair.
Sometimes the pattern is built on vertical lines combined with horizontal lines as
the Harp of the Winds.

Rhythm - There is much pleasure to be found in following the curving lines of
masses in a picture as they flow thru the pattern, repeating, paralle ling and leading
one's eyes around thru various parts.

Balance - A feeling of restful repose obtained by the grouping of shapes and
colors around a center in such a way that there is equal attraction on each side of
that center is called balance. In the picture of Whistler's Mother, the black curtain with its lacy design is used to balance the figure of the mother on the other side. Quite often the center of interest is found in the middle of the picture with small objects near it, but subordinate to it.

Choice of Pictures in the Home

It is not enough to know good pictures and to be able to discuss them but
one should know how to select those best suited to each room and learn how to hang or
place them so they appear to the best advantage.

Some pictures are social or formal in feeling and seem to belong to elaborate furnishings, velvets, silks, etc., while others are domestic and suited to a simpler environment. Saying Grace and Anna Brigitta are examples of the domestic type of picture. Some pictures are more suited to a man's room while others seem to be long in a woman's or girl's room, because of their feminine nature.

The choice of pictures will reflect the individuality of the homemaker.

Choose a picture that will give lasting pleasure, that is quiet and peaceful, not silly or too full of action.

For the living room, which is used by all members of the family and to receive and entertain guests, choose pictures of common interest - landscapes, portraits, architecture, and perhaps some religious subjects. For the formal or elaborately furnished room choose the formal, social type of picture. Many portraits come in this class. The domestic room will receive the domestic type of landscape, prints and also portraits. See title page and Figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5 on next page.

A dining room is not a place to hang pictures of realistic fruit, fish or
dead birds. In fact the fewer pictures the better. Almost all pictures suitable for
a living room will be suitable for a dining room. However, the most suitable ones
for a dining room are those that are decorative in character, as a Japanese print and
some flower paintings found in current magazine covers.
Fig. 1
Study group for Girls' Room

Fig. 2
Well arranged group on a radio

Fig. 3
Hang picture low over a desk

Fig. 4
Simple mantel arrangement

Fig. 5
Group pictures over davenport where one would seem lost

Fig. 6

Fig. 7
It is possible to find an appropriate picture for the kitchen. One woman whose husband manages a hatchery has a Japanese print of a rooster in her kitchen and gets considerable pleasure out of the lovely lines and color. Some flower pictures and Dutch interiors or paintings of still life (pictures of pots, pans or pigs) will add interest and color to the kitchen walls. Feeding Her Birds, The Sunflowers, Kitchen Maid, or Woman Peeling Apples are all good ones for a kitchen.

For bedrooms one may choose pictures of a more personal nature. Here one may express their individual tastes. Photographs or portraits of friends and relatives are permissible in bedrooms if one chooses. For the boys' room Fig. 7, No. 9 is a picture of interest to boys. The girls' room may have a distinctly feminine type of picture. Give the boy and girl a chance to help select their own, thus creating their interest in pictures and adding to their pride in their rooms.

The Choice of Frame

The purpose of the frame of a picture is to hold the picture in place, and to form a rest space between the picture and the wall. It will want to be less conspicuous than the picture itself. In choosing a frame see that it is not too wide or ornate. A safe rule is to select a frame which is the color of the medium tones in the picture not too light nor too dark. There are exceptions to this rule, however, for a narrow black frame often is successfully used particularly for etchings and Japanese prints which have black in their pattern.

The most useful type of frame is a simple moulding of dull gold, that is keyed to the predominate color tones in the picture by having a bit of the color rubbed into it.

The width of the frame will vary with the type of the picture. A delicate picture needs a fine scale frame while a forceful picture, one with large dark masses, will take a heavier frame. A picture of strong, vivid colors or one portraying motion needs a wider frame than a small, delicate, feminine type.

Often the question of using a mat is puzzling. A mat is used on etchings and drawings that show violent action, especially when the lines of the picture have a tendency to carry the eye abruptly to the frame. Where there is little background, that is, if the picture is crowded, a mat is needed. Where the picture is too small for the space it is to occupy or is an odd shape, a mat is used.
Placing Pictures in a Room

Oftentimes the effect of a good picture is lost by poor placing and hanging. The size and shape of the picture should harmonize with the wall space it is to occupy. A long, narrow vertical wall space will require a vertical picture and likewise the horizontal wall space will want the horizontal shaped picture or a group of pictures which will give the same effect. (See Fig.9 & 10). When horizontal pictures are hung in a group the upper or lower edge of the pictures should be in a straight line unless they are all of the same type or size, then the center one is elevated. This makes it more prominent.

The same is true when grouping pictures with furniture. Furniture that emphasizes the horizontal lines need the horizontal shaped pictures and furniture emphasizing the vertical lines will need the vertical shaped pictures.

A small picture should be hung under a large picture, never over it. Pictures hung in a group harmonize better if they are of the same general type. Do not hang pictures in stair-steps unless they actually are to be hung along a stairway.

Pictures should be hung above a single piece or group of furniture so as to become an important part of the furnishings of a room rather than to be an isolated spot. In Fig.3 the picture is above a desk which makes the picture belong to the group. If the desk were not there the picture would appear to be hanging in mid air. There is a pleasing harmony between the picture and the objects upon the desk, the lamp repeats the light tans of the picture while the purple bowl repeats the purples in the picture.

The same is true of Fig.2 the group over the radio. The candle which leads the eye upward to the picture or down to the objects on the radio makes the picture and the objects on the radio a more united group. This picture of Spring by Carot is a good one here because there is enough detail to make one want to study it more closely while sitting by the radio, and it also gives a pleasing effect when seeing it from a distance.
Harriet and Vette Goldstein in their book "Art in Everyday Life" give the following as their simple tests for judging picture arrangements:
1. Is each picture in the room there because it helps beautifully to complete a group?
2. Are the pictures hung low enough so that they are seen with the furniture as a unit?
3. Are they all hung on about the same level in the room so that they do not form a jagged line upon the walls?

Hanging Pictures
Small pictures, by that we mean any picture smaller than 2x3 ft., should be hung with an invisible wire. The wire is fastened to the back of the frame with screw eyes placed 2 or 3 in. down from the top edge and stretched tight enough so it won't show the hook in the wall Fig. 8.

Large pictures seem to need visible support and are hung with two wires from the picture moulding. To do this properly, fasten 1 end of the wire on a picture hook that fastens over the moulding. Bring the wire down thru the screw eye across the back and thru the other screw eye, up to the 2nd hook on moulding. This allows for adjusting and the 2 wires run straight up from the picture which is much more pleasing than the triangle made by the wires when using 1 hook. Compare Figs. 10 & 11.

Get someone to hold the picture against the wall, step back and look at it, have it moved up and down and to the side until it seems to be in just the right place. Locate the place for the hook by holding the wire in position where it will be when hung.

Cords are generally too conspicuous and draw the attention away from picture. If used at all be sure they hang in straight lines not triangular. Wire is invisible and more satisfactory.

Fig. 10- Large pictures are hung by visible wire. Picture and furniture harmonize in shape.
Fig. 11 - These wires cause lines which do not follow the structural lines of the room.

THE STORY OF THE TEN WORTH WHILE PICTURES

The Artist's Mother

Fig. 6, No. 6, called the Artist's Mother was painted by James Abbot McNeill Whistler (Hwis-ler). It is probably the best known and most loved picture of the group selected for this study. The picture expresses universal motherhood, showing the self sacrifice of a mother and the supreme devotion of a son. Here is a picture we like not only for the sentiment but for the composition as well. The masterly way Whistler has made us look at his mother, by the line of her dark dress against the lighter background which leads the eye directly to her face, yet this line is broken by the handkerchief and her hands. As the eye reaches the shoulder it is led to the face by the lines in her cap that fall on the dress. The light picture on the wall and dark curtain, with the lovely light lines running thru it, offset the attraction on the right side of the picture just enough to give an effect of balance. The horizontal lines of the picture on the wall, the baseboard, and box upon which her feet are resting give a restful effect while the vertical edges of the picture and the curtain add an element of strength. The pattern of lights and darks make a pleasing picture even when there is no color to add interest.

Whistler was an American artist born in Lowell, Mass., in 1834. Because of his father being an engineer in Russia his boyhood days were spent in Petrogard. He entered West Point but not liking this life of discipline broke away and spent most of his life as an artist in France and England. Whistler was also considered a master as an etcher. He is one of the three American artists to win the Paris medal of honor. He died in 1903.

Madame LeBrun and Daughter

Fig. 7, No. 7, is a lovely portrait of the artist Madame Vegee LeBrun and her daughter. Madame was sitting before the mirror preparing to paint her portrait when her daughter came running in and flung her arms about her mother. The mother glanced at the mirror and conceived that this would make a beautiful picture. The pictures are so placed as to build up a pyramidal shape in the principal part of the picture. The masses of light and dark draw our attention to the beautiful mother and child, the rhythmic lines made by the arms of the mother and daughter help to call our attention to the center of interest.
The arrangement of lines and masses of light and dark color is a strong part of the picture. This is one that can be enjoyed if done in tones of one color as we sometimes see it. However, Madame has used a beautiful color scheme of the three primary colors, red, yellow, and blue of soft intensities. The red and yellow repeat the warm color of the flesh and hair. The blue of the child's gown and the green of the couch make a pleasing contrast which heightens the effect of the warm colors. The background has been brought into harmonious relationship with the objects forming the center of interest by combining the primary colors in darker values.

Madame LeBrun was born in Paris in 1755. She painted pictures of note at the age of fourteen. At the outbreak of the French Revolution she left Paris for safety's sake. She painted over 650 portraits and 200 landscapes. She became a good friend of Marie Antoinette and painted hers and many other noted people's portraits.

The Dutch Interior

Fig. 6, No. 4, the Dutch Interior, by Pieter De Hooch (De-ho'ch) is a theme that engrossed many of the painters in the early Dutch school. We find the luminous shadow and sunlight, portrayed with fine color, one of the interesting things about this picture. The ceiling, the beautiful old chest, the windows, the spare amount of furniture, and the woman reading a book make up this composition. We are not so interested in what the woman is doing but De Hooch placed her there to add the color he wanted and to give the best balance with the other objects. The walls are grayed in tone so that they give a feeling of light moving on them. We find an agreeable pattern of light and dark. Everything is properly placed to give this fine pattern. The predominating color accent in this picture is red which is repeated in a number of well placed spots but is balanced and held together by a well toned gray green wall. This picture suggests a color scheme which we might use in the decoration of one of our own rooms.

Pieter De Hooch was born in Rotterdam in 1629 and died in 1677. He was one of the most, original of the early Dutch painters and his pictures are noted for their combination of strength and delicacy.

This picture would fit in a domestic living room where red is needed. Because of its detail it would be best over a desk or book case where one would have opportunity to study it.

Saying Grace

Fig. 7, No. 3, called Saying Grace by Jean Baptiste Simeon Chardin (shar-dan) is beautiful in color and idea and is one all will enjoy. It deals with the common things of life and portrays life and habits of French peasants. Chardin lived during the eighteenth century, was born on a lowly street in Paris, in 1699 and died in 1779. He never left this lowly street and consequently his paintings were of the common, everyday things - such as table ware, bread, meat, vegetables, and peasant people. His wife and children were his models, and most of his paintings were of domestic life.

The small child is saying grace diligently in order to receive her soup more quickly. Notice the amusement on the mother's face and the child looking up to see how her mother is responding to her hurry. The beautiful mellowed furniture, the drum repeating the color in the mother's apron, the copper urn repeating the warm red color that is found repeated throughout the picture tend to tell more of the intimate life of this family, as well as adding to the
pattern of the picture. It shows a fine relationship of color where everything
blends together. The light color makes a charming pattern with the contrast of
the darker background. The concentration of light tones in the central area brings
the interest to that part of the picture and the posing of the figures serves to
hold it there. The plain darker background tends to emphasize the central idea.

This picture has the atmosphere of worship before a meal and perhaps is ap-
propriate to use in the dining room. It would be appropriate for almost any room,
its soft lovely color adding to the color scheme.

Spring or Morning at the Lake

Fig. 6, No. 1, which is known by two names was painted by the well known
artist, Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (kɔʁɔ). Upon first glance at this picture
we think, - "Can this beautiful place be real?" The maiden is reaching for some
attractive leaves of a silvery birch and the two children with her are gathering
flowers. One is reaching up her arms in sheer joy because she feels the loveliness
of spring. Corot was a master painter who portrayed nature at her best. The shimm-
ering delicacy of trees and woods seems to be a work of the soul rather than of the
hand.

Corot loved trees and always placed them in a picture where they would be most
noticeable, and he always made them large so they would be the first thing seen.
We learn to recognize Corot's pictures by the way he paints his trees in that ex-
quisite tracery against the sky.

Corot exerted considerable influence upon the landscape artists of his day.
He painted nature as he saw it. Corot's parents helped him and were always symp-
pathetic with his work; he never was barrassed with the necessity of earning a
living. He saw the lacy, exquisite, peaceful, almost feminine beauty of nature.
He was quite satisfied if only he could put on canvas nature's beauties as he saw
them. "I am only a sky lark singing little songs in my grey clouds", he once said.
Corot was born in Paris, France, in 1796, and died in 1875. Other pictures by
Corot which are familiar are: Souvenir of Italy, Dance of the Nymphs, and the
Bent Tree.

The Pool

Fig. 6, No. 3, by Charles Daubigny (dɔ̃-bõni) shows a beautiful landscape that
might well be a place in Nebraska, it looks so like it. The Pool has the airiness
of soft afternoon with the cows leisurely coming down for a drink. There is con-
siderable pictorial interest in the picture, which consists of the rolling hills
and a grove of trees reflected in a pool of water teeming with life. The cows and
ducks lend a familiar atmosphere that makes us feel right at home or reminds us of
a place we have seen. How lovely it would be to have a picnic in this grove of
trees and watch their reflection creep across the pond.

Charles Daubigny inherited his love for painting from his father who was a
landscape painter. After some study Charles turned to nature for his subjects and
painted them with feeling. In fact, he preferred to live so close to nature that
he lived in a house boat in order to be more intimate with nature's changing moods.
Before the time of Corot, Daubigny and others it was the custom to use landscape
merely as a background for portraits and these were made in the studio without
reference to nature, therefore they look artificial. Corot, Daubigny, Pissarro
and others changed all this by painting directly from nature. Daubigny was French,
living during the years 1817 to 1878.

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Red Roofs

Fig. 6, No. 2. In this picture, by Camille Pissarro (pē-sā-rov) we find the artist producing an impression of sunlight. It is a good example of how sunlight beautifies the country side. The golden yellow color through the whole picture blends, the trees, houses, grass and hillsides, into a harmony and gives unity to the picture. The white of the stucco houses is changed to a soft beautiful yellow, the sunlight on the red roofs makes them become a vibrant orange-red while the sunlight also makes the grass sparkle like emeralds. This is a beautiful pattern of lights and darks, but the primary enjoyment of the picture is thru the color. Pissarro insisted upon painting out of doors and thus caught the impression of the sunlight upon the objects and the changing qualities the sunlight and breezes made with the swaying of the trees.

Camille Pissarro was born in the Danish West Indies and was one of our more recent French artists, 1830–1903. When a young man he moved to Paris where he studied with Corot. However, we find he did not follow Corot but joined what was the impressionist movement. At one time he went to London and viewed the works of Turner which gave him the desire to paint with brighter intensities of color.

The Boy with the Rabbit

Fig. 7, No. 9, Boy with the Rabbit by Sir Henry Raeburn (rē-burn) is a picture children will enjoy, especially boys. It would be appropriate to place in a boy's room. It is a somewhat idealistic picture of a young boy with his pet rabbit. The boy is impressed by being asked to pose for so great an artist and more pleased because his beloved pet is also included in the picture. This is shown by the tender way he is holding his pet close to him in order that it will behave properly while the picture is being painted.

Raeburn has focused our attention on the boy by using the very light color for the boy's face, his blouse, the rabbit and the light green leaves the boy is feeding the rabbit. This light is contrasted by the dark, mysterious indistinct foreground and background.

He was a noted Scottish painter that revealed his talent at an early age. He was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1756 and died in 1823. It is told of Raeburn that when he wished to paint a portrait, he would place a canvas either beside or just behind the subject. He then retired a short distance and conversed with the sitter until he saw the exact expression of the person before him. He would then go to the easel and paint what had impressed him, putting it on the canvas as rapidly as possible while it was still distinct in his mind. In this way he gave a true representation of the inner character of people.

Christ at Emmaus

Fig. 7, No. 10, by Gari Melchers (māl’ kārz) is a beautiful picture of Christ as he appeared after his crucifixion to some of his disciples. The story, Luke 24:13–26, tells of some of the disciples leaving the sepulcher and walking to Emmaus. While walking along a stranger appeared and talked with them. Arriving at the home of one, they invited him in to tarry. Jesus Christ broke bread for the evening meal, their "eyes were opened" and his identity was revealed to them. Amazement and wonder is seen upon the faces of the three people. Our attention is directed to Christ by their gazing at Him and by the light that shines around Him.

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The balance of this is of particular interest. Christ, on one side, is balanced by the bright objects on the table and the disciples sitting to one side. The pattern of light and dark is interesting and well worth study. This is a suitable picture for a library, or a study, or over a desk. It should be hung above a dark piece of furniture and where one can study it leisurely and repeatedly.

Melchers was a recent American artist born in Detroit in 1860. His father and mother were of foreign birth but moved to Detroit where the father was a sculptor. Early in Melchers' childhood his father discovered his talent and sent him to Germany. Melchers spent most of his life in Europe, mainly in Holland where he used the peasant people as his models. Melchers won the Paris medal of Honor at the International Exhibition of 1857. The honor never changed him for he continued to paint in a straight-forward, frank way, abhorring the conventional studio picture. Among the last things he did was to return to his birthplace and paint the murals in the entrance of the library.

Anna Brigitta

Fig. 6, No. 5. Anna Brigitta by Corneille Max is a lovely picture for a girl's room. The sweet little girl pausing a moment from picking cowslips shows the lovely innocence of childhood and youth. The artist makes us see the child's face by using the dark hood for contrast. Other interesting parts of the picture are the background which is a landscape showing fleecy white clouds and marshy meadow. The child's gown is also worthy of study, the quaint sleeves and neck with the ribbon decoration also expresses youth and innocence.

Corneille Max was born in Munich, May 10, 1875. He was gifted as a portrait and landscape painter and an etcher. His father was the internationally known artist Gabriel Von Max.

OTHER PICTURES FOR THE HOME

Landscape

Whistler - Battersea Bridge
Blue and Silver
Martin - View of the Stone
Hobbema - Avenue of Trees
Ruysdael - The Mill
Monet - The Poplars
Barber - September Fields
Constable - The Cornfield
Wandt - Silence of the Night
Inness - After a Summer Shower
Mill Pond - Autumn Oaks
Tito - Venetian Waters
Rembrandt - Landscape with Stone Bridge
East - Evening in Algiers

Pictures for Children

Sully - The Torn Hat
Whistler - Little Rose
Reynolds - Age of Innocence
Hooch - Girl with a Cat
Thoma - Dancing in a Ring
Van Dyck - Baby Stuart
Gainsborough - Blue Bay
Murillo - Children of the Shell
Reynolds - Miss Bowles
Velazquez - Infanta Margarita
Theresa

Pictures of Home Life

Chardin - The Kitchen Maid
Millet - The Knitting Lesson
Maes - Young Girl Peeling Apples
Vermeer - Young Woman with a Water Jug
Peeling her Birds - A Girl Reading a Letter
Terborch - The Concert
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Portraits
Leonardo - Mona Lisa
Melchers - Mother and Child
Holbein - Erasmus
Hals - The Laughing Cavalier
        The Jester

Rembrandt - Saskia
Holbein - The Merchant of Gisze
Manet - Boy with a Sword

Religious
Raphael - Madonna of the Chair
        Madonna of a Meadow
        Sistine Madonna
Millet - The Angelus
Leibl - Women in Church
L'Hermite - Among the Lowly
Holmann - Christ among the Doctors

Addresses of Picture Companies
Rudolph Lesh, 225 5th Ave., New York City.
Art Extension Press Inc., Westport, Conn.
The Colonial Art Co., Oklahoma City, Okla.
The Lincoln Fine Arts Co., Lincoln, Nebraska

Prepared by Rizpah Anna Douglass. Approved by Evelyn Metzger, Home
Economics Department Art Division.